

APPENDIX D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comment for the Mississippi River Trail plan was collected by electronic mail through a website created for the MRT plan (<http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/mrt/>). The website was created so that users could access all parts of the plan, view all related maps, and leave comments on the recommended trail. The MRT website was publicized through press releases in local newspapers and a feature on WOI radio.

The public comments received were generally of four types:

1. One type of public comment praised the push for trail building and showed full support for the MRT.
2. A second type of comment expressed funding concerns.
3. A third type of comment expressed safety concerns.
4. Finally, another type of public comment received showed support for trails but showed dissatisfaction with recommended MRT routing on bicycle lanes.

These public comments were used to further analyze and amend the plan for the recommended MRT.

Positive Support for the MRT

Comment from January 28, 2003

I am passionately exuberant about the trail! I live in Clinton County and have reviewed the draft map carefully. Can you share your reason for going to so far away from the river on dangerous county roads through Miles and Andover rather than the river route through Sabula and on to Clinton?

Is it still possible to get communities and businesses involved (ADM has a factory along the slough as well as a number of others that might be willing to work together to get a trail similar to the Illinois and Iowa Quad-Cities segments) to create a trail along the river through Clinton and Camanche?

Is there an active group working on this? Can you give me the name of the chairman and who might be holding the local community meetings?

A number of possibilities to connect with existing bike/pedestrian trail along the newly completed Highway 30/67 corridor between Clinton and Camanche are not shown on the draft map & may already be in the planning stages. This would tie in nicely with a trail along the river from the existing paved riverfront trail in Clinton on south to Camanche and then on to Scott County.

Comment from February 13, 2003

Read about this project, for the first time, in our local-area newspaper. Please keep advertising - as work progresses. Noted that a "Mark Twain" quote was used in your web-page discussion. Most folks (in Iowa) are not aware that Iowa has a history/connection to Samuel L. Clemens. Sam was 9 years old when his Great Grandmother (whose grave site is in the City Cemetery at West

Point, Iowa) passed away. Iowa has living, Clemens family decedents, residing in the small West Point community, which is situated 9 miles uphill (on State Highway 103) from the muddy Mississippi. Young Sam's Great Grandmother was a member of the first brick church built in Iowa, still in use today, in West Point (Lee County, Iowa).

The MRT project was being discussed in the many small town shops in our community this week (its influence on/to tourism!). MRT users will learn a great deal about Iowa when they travel through Lee County, where the first white man (Marquette) set foot in/discovered Iowa in 1673. MRT travelers will be able to visit the first National Cemetery established west of the Mississippi River in Lee County (in Keokuk, Iowa, another Mississippi River town). This national cemetery was established at the same time as Arlington National Cemetery (in Washington, DC). MRT bike enthusiast will learn that the majority of Iowa men (an estimated 85,000) who served in the Civil War, entered into the War of the Rebellion at camps set-up in Lee County. And MRT fans will discover that a young attorney by the name of Francis Scott Key, employed by a New York firm, was directly involved in the 1834 lottery and sale of the "Half-Breed" tract, in Lee County.

Please keep us informed about the MRT project. As you can see from the above data, we have a lot of history to share about Iowa, with the rest of the nation. Are there any plans to conduct presentations/discussions at the local-level (possibly in conjunction with County Board of Supervisors meetings)?

Sincerely, President, Community Public Library Foundation (fund-raising arm of the West Point Library/Museum/Tourist Information Center Project)

Comment from February 18, 2003

I'd like to open up the discussion of the purposed trail through SE Iowa.

Our group, the Des Moines County Nature Trail Association, DMCNTA, was formed in 2002. We would like to assist in the completion of the MRT in SE Iowa. We are in the process of developing a system of nature trails through out Des Moines County. We have so far completed a 3/4-mile section of the old Rock Island ROW north of Burlington.

Last week, two of us met with the Board of the Two Rivers Levee District. We explained to them the purposed MRT and to explore the use of their Levee in this area. They are supportive but have concerns. So as not to reinvent the wheel here: Has anyone else purposed or actually put a trail on a levee? Is it true that the levee CANNOT be raised with the topping off with 6" of rock or crushed limestone? That in effect, the top has to be lower 1st, before trail surface can be added.

Your comments or suggestions would be appreciated. Oh, one more thing. Would you like to add some pictures to your sight? I have numerous JPEGs I have taken with my digital camera I would send, if you're interested.

Comment from February 23, 2003

I think your plan is awesome! Building bike routes is the best investment that a community can make. This route will attract people from a variety of areas to ride it just as the Katy Trail in Missouri does. I certainly will if I am not too old by the time it gets finished.

Comment from February 24, 2003

What an excellent concept---go for it!!!

Comment from February 24, 2003

As the Mayor of Davenport, I want to assure you of the whole-hearted support and assistance of this City and all her citizens. We want this trail to happen, and we will do whatever it takes to help make it happen. We already have 10 miles of trail along the Mississippi River, and a short gap on Bettendorf's riverfront will soon disappear, so it will be even better. We already have a ramp onto the Government Bridge to access the Rock Island Arsenal; and the Illinois trails, which go 60 miles up the river and about that far into Illinois along the former Hennepin Canal. Along the southern part of our riverfront trail there are 100s of eagles in the winter and our Nahant Marsh. We're ready. Let's go.

Comment from February 24, 2003

Thank you for offering input possibilities on this project. The goals of this project are good for Iowa and good for public recreation. Like most public projects, ultimate success often relies on public involvement and support. I have previously offered input on the route north of Lansing, and attended a meeting sponsored by DOT and ISU last year. Unfortunately, the meeting was not publicized and I was the only one there from the general public about the MRT, a few others were there for related issues. I knew about the meeting only from my involvement in other Mississippi River issues and organizations. I am a community planner by occupation and do work in trail planning and design at the state and community level; I live in Lansing.

It's important that the general public in Lansing know about this trail and have opportunities to input into it. It's particularly important that the Lansing city government is given a formal opportunity to know project details and submit input on trail issues. Particular concerns involve connections to the community and the city's responsibility to safely accommodate the new bike traffic that is planned to be marketed to this facility. There should be concern for the safety of the tourist that are intended to be attracted to this project, since it is being promoted as a multi-use "recreational trail". The common speed on this highway is 60 to 70 mph, with the common transit of oversized vehicle cargo. Connecting into Lansing will be particular safety; it's unlikely this can be done without city government cost; the sooner they start planning for it the better.

There are prime opportunities for planning some off-road trail segments north of Lansing.; some of this was checked into several years ago when I was doing some consulting tourism and recreation planning for a county tourism and economic development commission. Of course, interim arrangements are often necessary, but they must be part of a master plan. Of particular concern is the importance of the road shoulder north of Lansing remaining available in key locations for the parking of vehicles for fishing activity and also for duck hunting and other public lands activities, which are long-standing activities in this area. Earlier, the DOT said that the entire shoulder would be posted against parking. Any attempt to do this will raise a storm of opposition, including from the DNR and Fish and Wildlife Service who are also promoting programs to use the refuge more. It's important that people in this area be able to see the details of what is being proposed. I believe a compatible bike route can be planned, to be implemented in phases; but it's important that the public be involved and knowledgeable.

There should also be concern about trail continuity at the state line. In my work with Minnesota DOT on transportation and trail issues, it's clear that they are concerned about the safety of placing a formal bike trail along the extension of Highway 26. They also have potential for off-road segments of such a trail within this highway corridor. A comprehensive and multi-phased plan is a natural in this difficult corridor; we don't want to establish credibility problems with the concept at the beginning. Over the years, many worthwhile recreational type ideas have been proposed for this area, with many being defeated or seriously compromised due to lack of public understanding and support. Our area can use the benefits of such ideas, but as we all know, the devil is in the details.

Comment from March 3, 2003

How excellent to be able to put such a plan together and for Iowa to be a part of this trail.

My granddaughters and I do an all girls vacation every year, it would be an excellent way for them to see the sights. We do a lot of camping on our trips; this would be excellent.

We'd also be more than happy to be part of brochure to promote this area.

Comment from March 5, 2003

I'm sending this for my husband. He is president of Harpers Ferry Boosters. The Boosters is a small group that gets together once per month and works at bettering our little town. We are very much interested in the MRT. Please keep us informed about plans to build trail near Harpers Ferry.

Comment from March 10, 2003

I am sorry that I don't have the time to study this plan in detail right now, but I think the idea is *long past due*. The Mississippi River is near and dear to my heart. I grew up in Clinton. My parents are natives of Dubuque and Muscatine, as were their parents and grandparents. I know how integral a part of life the river is to those who live on it's banks. It is our state's *best feature* for attracting tourism dollars. We are remiss in not making the most of it. A trail would attract adventure tourists and would provide needed increased recreation for Iowa's citizens. It would hopefully end up revitalizing towns like Clinton that have steadily declined over the past twenty or so years. I would hope that the trail would increase awareness of the need to clean up and preserve the river and it's floodplains. I would like to see the trail result in a sustainable bio-system: a win-win scenario for land & water, people, flora, and fauna. The resurgence of the eagle population indicates that we're possibly on the right track. It would be wise to include safeguards that would deter development at the expense of the resource. I would not want to see the trail developed to the point that we have another 'Wisconsin Dells' or 'Minnesota lakes' (completely lined with vacation homes and resorts). Vacation homes/development projects lining *every mile* of the river would only take away from its beauty and appeal. In other words, the trail concept is fabulous only as long as 'urban sprawl' is avoided. I don't know how you'll be able to encourage that. Also, don't forget that The Mighty Mississippi has a will of her own every so often. *Plan* on needing to repair the trail every so often when she floods.

Comment from March 10, 2003

I am delighted to hear that this is going forward. I started taking my children to trails back in 1975. Naturally at that time it involved going to Elroy Sparta and the Root River Trails. The kids are now grown and still have good memories of those experiences. The grandchildren now go with me.

Comment from March 10, 2003

As a Burlington native (now living in Iowa City for many years) and avid bicyclist, I wholeheartedly support the MRT plan: I'd love another Iowa trail to ride (particularly one as scenic as this will be), and I am strongly in favor of anything that would help kick-start the economies of ailing river towns -- Burlington being one of them. I spend a few weeks in northern Minnesota each summer and have seen first-hand what an extensive trail system has meant to the small towns along the way. Iowa is way behind its neighboring states in recreational trail development, not to mention

tourism-related development of its most majestic natural resource, the Mississippi. Count mine as a strong vote in favor of the MRT project! Thanks.

Phone Call on March 11, 2003

I got a phone call from a 65-year-old gentleman from Williamsburg, Iowa, regarding the MRT route. He said he was very much in support of the development of the MRT and had ridden trails in other states. He said that it had the potential to become a major tourist attraction like the Appalachian Trail on the east coast. This call may have been generated by the WHO radio interview last Friday.

Comment from March 11, 2003

We believe this to be a very desirable idea and should go forward as soon as possible. I am a member of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and am wondering if they are working with you. This sounds like something right up their alley. Here's to a great idea.

Comment from March 13, 2003

Thank you for your support of the Iowa MRT. I often tell visitors to Iowa that our bike trails are "Iowa's hidden treasure." The MRT would be the crown jewel of that treasure. Keep up the good work!

Comment from March 15, 2003

"Connectivity" program between Effigy Mounds and the new Sny Magill parcel by Feds feeds this idea wonderfully and could provide funds. I'm sure you have thought of this already. Trail between McGregor and Marquette at river level is highly desirable but difficult. Needs creative thinking. The narrow road north of Marquette, Highway 76, has the same problems. River level trail would have much more attraction than up and down the hills. How can we help? GREAT PROGRAM!!!

Comment from March 15, 2003

Go Go Go

Comment from March 16, 2003

My husband and I are encouraged by the plans for this trail, and support its development. We want to be sure that the trail protects the environment it passes through, and helps people gain appreciation for Iowa's natural resources and river communities. I would encourage "someone" to produce a guide that indicates inns and restaurants/pubs along the way for R&R. I could easily see making a vacation trip out of the trail and its host communities.

Comment from March 16, 2003

I think the plan sounds good. A bike trail would be wonderful, especially for the residents of Iowa and people who live around the trail.

Comment from March 22, 2003

Last weekend we took a bike tour from Marquette, north to La Crescent, over to La Crosse and back down to Prairie du Chen, in two days.

The Wisconsin side of our trip was wonderful with wide shoulders. 100% of the time Wisconsin provided at least a 2-foot shoulder, 85% of the time it was a 5 foot shoulder and we estimated the amount of actual time spent on the same portion of the road as vehicles was about 30 seconds.... a couple rough spots on the shoulders, and then crossing the road to get to the other side. The shoulders were in pretty good shape, very little sand and/or obstacles.

Iowa, on the other hand, did not provide any shoulders. We were constantly checking our mirrors, making sure the next vehicle coming around the corner had seen us. It was very unnerving with all the twists and hills, making sure drivers were paying attention. Iowa drivers were relatively courteous, but some of those roads along the river, there isn't much room for error. The only safety net, if needed was down into a ravine--literally no place to go but down. Iowa needs to compete with Wisconsin and Illinois in order to get the touring cyclists to our side of the river. We need to widen the shoulders to at least 4 feet, and get these small towns to clean up (remove old cars, mobile homes, and tires) and to cater to cyclists.

MRT is a great opportunity to get the communities along the route aware of bicyclists and educate drivers in the area how to "Share the Road" by slowing down, allowing plenty of room, and then when the cyclist gets into town be friendly and take their tourism dollars and run.

Bicycle touring is a great way to see our beautiful state. Bicycle tourists need places to camp/B&B's/hotels, places to get water, places to air up their tires (bike shops?) and a place to take a break.

Off road trails are nice also, but wide shoulders are splendid. "Share the Road" signs and education will certainly help.

Comment from March 31, 2003

I think the overall design of the Iowa MRT is grand. I have ridden in the Pikes Peak area several times and as beautiful as that area is, cycling on those roads was a safety concern of mine. I would be interested to read more detail about improving bicycle access on the bridges crossing to Illinois, in particular, those that cross and would provide access to the trail system already in place in Illinois along the Mississippi. I would like to see some suggestion that other trails in Iowa, such as the one from Dyersville to Dubuque, would be encouraged and designed to connect to the Iowa MRT. I would also like to have ANY and ALL Iowa roadways that are scheduled for improvement or redesign have a hard surface bike lane included into the budget. Thanks and continue your efforts!

Funding Concerns

Comment from February 24, 2003

I am very much against the proposed trail, in view of the state's budget and problems. I am against spending gasoline tax, road use tax, and any tax money for bicycles, ATVs, and the likes benefits. Improve the useful roads we do have.

Safety Concerns

Comment from February 25, 2003

Recently discovered your web site, and the proposed Mississippi River Bike Trail proposal and information. I take it you would like some feedback from the public, and or are avid bikers?

My wife and I and our four children, from the earliest times, with trainer wheels, to this last summer when we biked the bike trail in the Itasca State Park at the headwaters of the Mississippi River, have been active bikers in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

I would like to share a prime safety issue. I do not think bikes and vehicular traffic along a highway mix well, regardless of how much space is provided along the shoulder. The only way I would feel safe with my family biking along this environment, would be with concrete barrier rail separating us from the motorized vehicles. Casualties will occur, how many are acceptable is the real question.

We have felt relatively safe on the reclaimed railroad corridor bike trails due to the lack of contact with motorized vehicles. We have biked almost all rails to trails bike trails in Iowa. Probably six different rails to trails settings in Wisconsin, and five in Minnesota.

The issue of safety revolves around respect, courtesy, and drivers of motorized vehicles concentrating on their task at hand, simply paying urgent attention to their job of controlling their cars, trucks vans and busses at an appropriate speed for the conditions of the roadway.

When I drive my Honda Accord around town, or on the roadway, I see so many people driving excessive speeds, over the posted speed limit, raging on other drivers to get out of their way, tail-gating, weaving in and out, crossing over in front lane changes, it is just amazing there are not more multi-vehicle pileups and massive loss of life.

When I see in the newspaper, that someone is killed in a traffic accident, due to a load shifting off a truck and killing a young woman, and there are no consequences, a drunk driver killing a biker and no consequences, getting probation, the message is clear, you can kill with your motorized vehicle, and there are few laws to prosecute the idiot drivers.

I applaud your efforts to offer more routes for bikers, but I do not think the dangers can be mitigated. The risks are many, including wide vehicles, large mirror extensions from trucks towing boats, and campers.

I think in many cases people get lazy, drift off, get distracted, and then by the time they may see a bike along the road, they are going to fast to react to avoid a tragedy. Public awareness may help, but barrier rail separation is clearly the best means to achieve the necessary safety to parallel the new proposed bike trails along existing roadways.

I think the cost of barrier rails would be problematic, however, but they offer the best practical solution to avoiding preventable accidents.

Anticipating problems with this corridor plan for bike travel should be a top priority. I have had several close calls in the city with inattentive car drivers, and my conclusion is that people drive to fast, do not pay attention to what they are doing, are distracted by the cell phone, radio, children, friends, and only after an accident does it become obvious they were negligent.

It all comes down to this, you the individual are responsible for your own safety. Signs should be posted to this effect on your new along the shoulder bike trails to at least make people aware of this reality.

Hope you read this and it makes you think about a few things from a bike person's perspective.

Comment from March 27, 2003

Will you have bike symbols in the asphalt along some of the paths?

Recommended Trail Alignment, Facility Type, and Modal Concerns

Comment from February 18, 2003

I am the Clinton County Engineer. The following are my comments on the proposed plan. The alignment of the MRT through Clinton County wanders 6 or 7 miles from the River in some areas and runs through Ag areas and along the County landfill. I would like to see the trail hug the River as close and as frequent as possible and utilize the existing trail through part of the city of Clinton. Thank you for asking for comments.

Comment from February, 3 2003

I sure would like to see the trail take on a whole new direction. First the new highway 30/67 segments that were built along the Camanche Avenue-Lincoln Way corridor in Clinton have a protected bike lane all the way to the Camanche-Hwy 67 interchange. It wouldn't take more than a mile to connect the current riverfront path to the new highway 30 segment and that would run along behind the municipal dock and ADM. It seems like they put a lot of effort into off road trail in Illinois and that is generally where I rollerblade because it is tree covered and scenic. I think that is the model that would be absolutely perfect from Sabula to Follets. I completely understand that it would be very costly but if it were in the design all along wouldn't that help communities with grant writing? And last but not least is it too late to change? My county engineer is on a local committee through our chamber of commerce and he had some great ideas too.

Comment from March, 3 2003

Thanks for the good work on the MRT. Muscatine Trails Team recommends the route continuing our River Front Trail down the levee, all the way to Toolesboro. We much prefer the levee route to old Highway 61, which is in the current suggested MRT route south of Muscatine. We are initiating talks with city, county, industries, levee district and COE to develop the levee route. We request you change the recommended MRT route to a continued trail down the levee.

Thank you in advance. Please let me know your thoughts. As we seek funds to complete this segment of levee trail it would be very helpful to us to have the levee route as the recommended MRT route connecting to our riverfront trail extending south to Toolesboro.

We appreciate your consideration of this change.

Comment from March, 3 2003

I am glad that the specs call for asphalt, so that the bike trail can be used by rollerbladers as well. Hopefully the bridges can have an asphalt surface as well -- planks don't work too well for rollerbladers. But the insistence of following highways tremendously takes away much of the beauty that the trail could have had. Most of the trail will not even have the Mississippi river within view. It is like traveling the "Great River Road" when on the Iowa side you can almost never see the river -- while if you go across the river and try the Illinois side they manage to have many roads right down by the river. I think we need to take our time and build a trail that is off-road and will truly capture the beauty that is the Mississippi River. Most of this is just a trail along the highway through farm land. Not very exciting.

Comment from March, 10 2003

Times are a changing. There is a new and expanding group of paved trail user that you make no mention of---Inline skaters (rollerblades). Wish you would give some consideration to this group now instead of trying to bandaide later. Roadside "bike" trails are usually covered with rocks and junk that gets blown off the roadway and mower "hay". Not so pleasant for everyone and impossible to skate on. More paved off road trails please. Yes, I know they are more expensive. Sorry to sound so negative but you asked. I do like paved trails. I'm 62 by the way.

Comment from March, 10 2003

Thank you very much for a detailed, comprehensive, and thoughtful study for sitting the Mississippi River Trail in Iowa. It certainly was a formidable task, especially because of some confusion as to the ultimate aims of the MRT.

In short, the MRT is caught between the horns of a dilemma. Should it be a route for experienced, mature, and long distance bicyclists to explore the length of the river? Or should it be as is the East Coast Greenway: "an off-road multi-use trail linking cities and towns"?

Right now the MRT is ambivalent. It seems to want both. "The ultimate vision is of a route that is off-road as much as possible along abandoned rail corridors and other landscape features. Where necessary is will be on low-volume rural roads and on paved shoulders along bikeable routes."

Iowa's Draft MRT plan certainly skirts the "ultimate vision" in favor of more immediacy. "The MRT will add bicycle lanes to many roadways and thereby remove cyclists from the same travel path as automobiles and trucks. The additional paved shoulder width required for bicycle lanes has also been shown to reduce motor vehicle crashes."

It calls for only 9 miles of new off-road trails, while putting great emphasis on constructing paved shoulders on existing roads - most of them major highways. It calls for 255 miles of such shoulders, with 205 miles needing to be constructed.

The draft plan puts its eggs in the shoulder basket, a design concept that has some flaws:

1. Shoulders along major highways do not appeal to casual bicyclists, simply because they sense a lack of safety.
2. They are right. Bicycling on shoulders of high speed highways is not safe, especially when the shoulders are also to be used in case of vehicle accidents and pull-overs.
3. The fun of bicycling is greatly diminished by utilizing many highway corridors. Cyclists have major problems with debris, dirt, and road noises.

4. Commercial and industrial usage greatly limits the scenic value of bicycling on highway shoulders.

But the main flaw with highway shoulders is that they are not needed. The experienced cyclist will do long distance bicycling without them. They are a nice amenity, but not imperative. This cyclist knows that he has the right to be on the roads, and will use the roads no matter what their condition.

The experienced cyclist really needs a fairly simple "suggested route" that will give directions to confusing routing situations, advice about the best routes in an area, and point to amenities, attractions, and food, drink, and rooming facilities along the route.

The casual cyclist, on the other hand, does need either an off-road trail or roads with very limited traffic in order to enjoy cycling. This cyclist, usually biking in the local community, is the very focus of the often repeated slogan: "Healthy trails build healthy communities." But this cyclist can expand from the local community to surrounding ones; can utilize off-road trails in the area to do errands and bike to work; and can use an expanding network of trails and roads to enjoy fitness, scenery, the natural environment, and events in the area.

Should the MRT seek to allow this cyclist to expand bicycling parameters, or should it be a long distance route for the experienced biker. Should it ultimately cater to the great number of casual bikers, or simply be an amenity for the very few cross-county cyclists?

The present direction of the Iowa MRT draft plan, with only 9 miles out of 255 miles devoted to off-road trails, is decidedly with the experienced cyclist.

I think it should be a plan for both.

For the experienced cyclists, identify viable routes that can be used right now. Publish the results as a guide, not as a definitive MRT route.

For the casual cyclist, start the web building process by which communities reach out to the riverbanks in and outside their boundaries as locations for off-road paths. Ultimately, this web will mesh with little used county roads and neighboring communities to establish a true Mississippi River Trail. Identify the major routing for this web, and publish it as the Mississippi River Trail.

Iowa needs a MR Trail, not a MR Shouldered Road.

Comment from March 14, 2003

Please look at a route around the Fort Madison area. There is an interest in our local area. We have had meetings with the Iowa DOT, in regards to the Highway 61 bypass. We have been put on hold though. Thanks.

Comment from March 21, 2003

The MRT should be designed to allow persons to travel safely by horseback, too. Campgrounds should be developed along the way.

Comment from April 23, 2003

Notes about Iowa MRT Draft plan:

The plan is just about out of town roads and highways. It assumes that towns will handle - and build - trails within their boundaries.

But it still insists that the way to officially mark the MRT is with widened shoulders (or bike lanes, which it sometimes calls them).

This is a DOT document - attuned to what the DOT has to do to make a MRT.

It relies upon somewhat questionable data. For instance, it considers the roadway between Bettendorf and LeClaire as a "B," suitable for the average adult rider.

Also at only two points in the entire sweep of Iowa MRT out-of-town roadway does it consider the "C" rider - the family and child rider. Both of these are the off-road paths that it uses for segments that have just too much traffic for lanes.

Paved shoulders for ordinary bicyclists are not a completely "safe" option. A shoulder, by definition, is a safety feature for vehicles. In case of having a vehicle veer off the roadway, the shoulder prevents a vehicle from going into soft areas and possibly interacting with trees, structures, etc. A bicycle traveling on a shoulder compounds this safety feature. Also high speed traffic creates wind drafts that sometimes impact bicyclists on shoulders; young, inexperienced cyclists, especially, can not handle this.

It makes no discrimination between country roads and major highways in its use of 6-foot shoulders for the MRT. Thus roads such as New Era Road get a 6-foot shoulder (actually 12 feet of concrete, 6 feet on both sides) the same as busy Hwy 67 or 22. It makes no provision for funding options for the municipalities along the route. As it states, "it does not address the urban trails to complete the Iowa MRT."

And fundamentally, it does not address - except peripherally - the basic problem with the MRT at this time in its growth: is it a route for cross-country, mature bicyclists; or is it a catalyst to develop a true trail - off-road and friendly to every type of bicyclist?

If it is indeed a route for the serious cyclist, all the shoulders are not needed, although they make a nice amenity. Such a cyclist can do without them. Give this cyclist a route on decent roads and he will be happy.

Also if is just for the long distance cyclist, why all the emphasis on off-road trail development, as in the recent T-3 earmarking? Why weren't we urged to write up shoulder enhancements for rural segments of the MRT instead of what took place: off-road trails all along the MRT.

Finally, what rankles is that the draft plan "sets in stone" a route (it calls it a trail, but it s not) that just could hinder the construction of off-road trails along a significant portion of Mississippi River shoreline. By locating the "MRT" on a shoulder route using existing roads and highways, what will push the DOT, counties, and municipalities to build true trail connections?

The Iowa MRT draft plan represents an expensive amenity for the cross-county bike traveler, and a missed opportunity for the ordinary citizen-bicyclist who would like to bicycle along the Mississippi River.